



Medial Branch Block

Patient Information Sheet



What is a Medial Branch block?

The spine is made up of many bones called vertebrae. Sometimes the joints between these vertebrae become arthritic or painful. A medial branch block is a temporary procedure where local anaesthetic is injected into the nerves that supply the painful facet joint. This does not take away the pain but blocks the feeling of the pain for 4-6 hours. If the medial branch block gives good relief a more permanent procedure called a Radiofrequency Ablation can be used to burn the affected nerves which offers a more permanent result.



What does the procedure involve?

A diagnostic CT and sometimes a nuclear medicine bone scan are required to find the area that may be causing the pain. After receiving a referral from your GP you will be booked in by staff and asked a series of questions. We may need to see your previous imaging.

After a consultation with our radiologist and completing a consent form you will be positioned by the technologist. Positioning scans will be taken. The area that we will be targeting is very small so it is very important that you stay as still as possible during this examination. As our doctors aim to be as accurate as possible, this procedure may take up to an hour.

When an appropriate injection site has been selected local anaesthetic will be placed around the area of concern to numb the area. The local anaesthetic lasts for approximately 4-6 hours.

You will need someone to drive you home as you may experience some weakness from the local anaesthetic. You will be given a Pain Diary to assess how your pain feels over the next 8 hours. Please complete this as accurately as possible and return it to your referring doctor. Your referring doctor will discuss your results with you and if they are successful will provide you with options for more permanent results.



What are the risks?

With all procedures piercing the skin, there is a small chance of infection or bleeding at the injection site. You may be required to stop blood thinners to reduce this risk. You may experience some discomfort after the local anaesthetic has worn off, however this should subside within a week.



What costs are involved?

The medial branch block is covered by Medicare.

Do I Need a Referral?

Yes. You will need to receive a referral from your GP, or you can contact our staff on 5330 3955 as you may be able to obtain a GP referral through Integrated Pain Management.

